



PRESS RELEASE

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Georgetown County Library wins Statewide Award

Governor lauds Carvers Bay Branch efforts

The successful effort to bring books, technology and education to the residents of rural northwestern Georgetown County has earned accolades from the S.C. Department of Commerce, and a plaque presented by South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley.

On March 4th, at the South Carolina Rural Summit in Aiken, Georgetown County Library was presented the Education Award for the construction of the Carvers Bay Library, and the computers, classes, software and technology club that filled it.

“Rural areas are the heart of South Carolina,” said Gov. Haley. “It’s important that individuals in our rural areas become the drivers of change that can help make their communities successful. By working together, community leaders can help attract new industry to their areas. The future is bright for our rural communities.”

Haley was the keynote speaker at the summit, which brought together community leaders, economic developers and state officials to share ideas, experiences and knowledge to improve rural South Carolina. Local library efforts were lauded as an example of how improvement in education can add to the quality of rural life.

“We opened the Carvers Bay Branch Library in 2006,” said Library Director Dwight McInvaill. “There had never been a public library there before. The nearest one was about an hour away round trip. The area was isolated and poor with illiteracy approaching 30%, unemployment 15% (in good times), and poverty 20%.”

The library construction was made possible by a \$695,450 federal grant from the Small Business Administration along with county and state funds altogether totaling about a million dollars. The local Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation gave the library a special and substantial grant to establish an innovative technical center for teens. When the library was built, it became a bustling center for residents, and teens flocked to the gaming, video production, and new technology events held there.

By August 2006, WebJunction (www.webjunction.org) – a web-based learning center for libraries – had named the new facility as the National Library of the Month. Then, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in January 2007 released a video nationally called “Keeping Your Community Connected” highlighting the Carvers Bay Branch Library’s achievements (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PM7jAbvLUFc>). When the Georgetown County Library became in January 2008 the first South Carolina institution ever to win a National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, First Lady Laura Bush lauded the fact that the library-card registration rate in Carvers Bay had gone from one in 50 to one in six.

The technology and gaming programs launched in Carvers Bay were expanded to all four county library branches, where they continue to flourish. In an effort to serve even more patrons, the technology has been given dual uses: at the Georgetown branch, the game room also serves as a Small Business Center replete with eight computers, workshops, and individualized help for job seekers and business owners.

“We want to continue to be a place where books are just the beginning,” said McInvaill. “Our branches have always been hubs of activity in the community, and we know, to continue that, we need to give patrons the latest technology, and the best service possible.”

